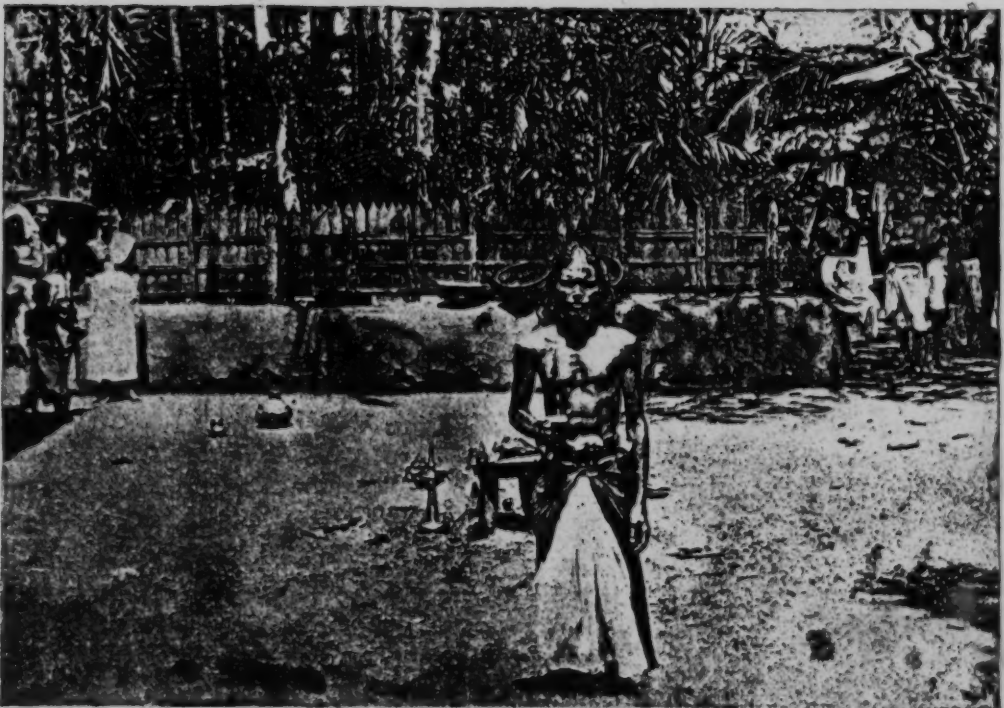


6: Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900) 1915

A WII Kerala A WII
Nayar

PL. XII.



A VELICHCHAPPAD.

[Facing P. 242]

791
142
292
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302
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361 The Nayars, like other Malayali Hindus, are not lovers
 564 of towns, but generally live in detached
 Habitations. houses, with large compounds and good
 gardens. The strict customs of caste purity and impurity in
 former times made them desert places where they were li-
 ble to be polluted by the members of very low castes. They
 generally select the site of a house either on the margin of
 a fertile valley or ravine with bright green fields of rice in
 35/ front. The entrance to their compounds, which are often some-
 what raised off the ground by laterite or mud walls, is at some
 little distance from the main house, and consists of a door in
 the centre of a strong gate-way, which is the first that attracts
 one's attention as the dwelling is approached. The gate is quaint-
 ly constructed, and the surroundings are exceptionally neat and
 tidy. It is also essential that a stair or a ladder should lead
 up to it from the bank of a green level paddy flat, remind-
 ing one of the days when security of life and property
 depended upon one's own ability to laugh a siege to scorn;
 when a Nayar house was his castle, and when at the gate-way
 were posted retainers to keep watch and ward against enemies.
 343 Seats for them to rest on, right and left, both outside and
 inside, a solid quaintly carved door and lintel, a room above
 approached by a ladder from inside, with windows, or open-
 ings whence shots were discharged on lawless intruders, and fi-
 nally a thatched roof, complete the characteristics of a gate house.
 35/ Permission to build such a gate house was a rare privilege and
 had to be obtained from the rulers, but with a change in the old
 342 order of things, this restriction has, like many others of the kind,
 3787 ceased to exist. The plan and other details of the structure of
 a Nayar house are determined in strict conformity with the
 principles of the ancient Hindu science of architecture based on
 astrology. A compound or garden is first selected and measured
 out into a square plot and is then divided into four parts by
 imaginary lines running lengthwise and breadthwise through
 the centre or middle of it. Either the north-east or south-west
 portion is chosen for the site of a house, the former being pre-
 3744 ferred to the latter. The south-east corner is generally set
 apart as the family burial-ground. There are again special
 spots selected for the well, tank, cow-shed, serpent grove and
 the family deity. The selection of the site for the house is